

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

T H E

bulletin

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March 2006



Up Front from the President



Internationally, our Muslim brothers and sisters are up in arms over cartoons drawn and published caricaturing the prophet Mohammad. Nationally, we have had situations such as that in British Columbia where politicians have tried to silence teachers from speaking on education issues. Provincially, the Chief of Police has chosen to publicly browbeat a reporter for writing a story with which the chief disagreed. In the teaching ranks of our own province, two teachers were suspended for a week without pay for speaking out at a forum arranged by NLTA on the topic of stress.

It appears that the issue of free speech is getting the once over again. As with all things precious, maybe we have to be occasionally prodded into a re-examination just so we can fully appreciate its value. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that everyone has the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press. In a democracy, people must be free to discuss matters of public policy, criticize governments and offer solutions to social problems.

Maybe it would be better if we asked ourselves what life would be like if we didn't have freedom of speech. Or, if we asked ourselves what kinds of injustices over the centuries were collectively or individually committed to cause people to be motivated to the point of insisting, sometimes at great societal and personal cost, that freedom of speech be treated as one of our most treasured freedoms.

However, for our purposes as teachers of the youth of our province and as members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, we must discuss the value of hearing what teachers have to say. Or, as above, we must examine what is lost when those of us who are the practitioners are not listened to. Or, even more to the point, what valuable insight is lost when we are not free to express our views or concerns when new programs or initiatives are being considered for implementation or are implemented without our input.

Yet, it appears that we are rarely, if ever, asked to contribute and if, out of frustration we do contribute, people have been only too quick to "put us in our place". However, I now feel that those days are past and we will now be asked. Both the premier and the director of the Eastern School District had indicated to me personally that they want to see a forum set up where our teachers, who have so much to offer, will be able to offer their professional expertise.

The appreciation developed as a result of my experiences working with my colleagues in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the observational experiences that have been provided to me as a result of the position I now hold make me even more certain that the professional expertise of our teachers cannot, under any circumstances, be disregarded. To do so is to do a grave disservice to the children in our care.

Ken

THE bulletin

Lesley-Ann Browne
Editor

Michelle Lamarche
Editorial Assistant

Linda Babstock, John Bishop,
Elliott Green, Louise King
Design • Printing • Distribution

Linda Farrell
Online Services

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Luck of the Irish Bulletin Contest

Win an NLTA surprise package!

Hidden among the pages of this March issue of *The Bulletin* is a **shamrock**. Hidden among the pages of March's online issue of *The Bulletin* is a wee little **leprechaun**. Search for the shamrock and the leprechaun and mark your answers below.

Shamrock – Page #: _____ **Leprechaun – Page #:** _____

NOTE: The online version of the March issue of *The Bulletin* can be found on our website at www.nlta.nl.ca. Go to "Publications" and scroll down to "The Bulletin".

Send your completed contest entry to either:

Email: mail@nlta.nl.ca

Fax: 726-4302 or 1-877-711-6582

Mail: The Bulletin Contest
3 Kenmount Road
St. John's, NL A1B 1W1

Please include the following information on your entry:

Name: _____

School: _____

Address (where we can mail your prize): _____

Tel: (school) _____ (home) _____

The contest is open to all active and substitute teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Only one entry per teacher.

Deadline: March 31, 2006

All submissions received by the deadline will be entered for the draw. Email messages will be printed. The first entry drawn that contains the correct answers will win! Only one winner per contest. The name of the winner will be published in *The Bulletin*.

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Breakfast can make a big difference

Child nutrition is making waves through the educational system. Last spring a coalition of health groups in Newfoundland and Labrador warned that "Without immediate and creative interventions, obesity in children and youth will continue to increase, creating a legacy of health problems in the future." A significant intervention is coming in the form of the recently established *Healthy Students – Healthy Schools* provincial initiative which aims to, among other things, promote healthier food choices in schools and help schools better connect with community resources.

Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador supports nutrition programs in about half the province's schools. Programs are community-owned, are run by volunteers and bring outside community resources into the school. The Foundation responds to requests for support, and has developed a 'Best Practices' strategy that helps schools take a giant step toward improved health. Menus are planned in accordance with *Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating*, with an emphasis on fruits, milk and milk products, and whole grains.

Daphne LeDrew, Executive Director, Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador says, "As awareness of the importance of child nutrition increases, and with initiatives like *Healthy Students – Healthy Schools*, interest in school-based nutrition programs is growing. At the recent Principals School Health sessions in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor, 12 schools requested Kids Eat Smart start-up kits. One of the key things we emphasize is the community development model, which brings more volunteers into the school. Every program is different, of course, but we keep hearing from principals that the model works."

Derek Drover is a school breakfast enthusiast. As principal at Victoria All Grade in Gaultois, he feels that having a Kids Eat Smart breakfast program

makes a huge contribution to school health, and also offers a whole lot more.

Obviously, nutritious food is a staple for child health. But Drover says, "Our School Council first looked into a nutrition program as part of our school development. We haven't looked back. We've had support in all regards from Kids Eat Smart Foundation – funding, volunteer support, nutrition information, and more. The breakfast program has brought a collaborative environment in the school: students, parents, volunteers and teachers all work together. And our breakfast program is a big part of the Healthy Schools package that we're looking into. It's become part of our school culture, and a part that we're very proud of."

Nominations sought for Drover Award

The Drover Award has been established by the Reading, English and Drama Special Interest Council (REaD) to recognize contributions in the areas of English Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing) as well as the study of drama. Nominees must have demonstrated outstanding achievement in the teaching and learning of English Language Arts in Newfoundland and Labrador. One award may be given annually in recognition of exemplary teaching practices in English Language Arts.

Nominations must come from REaD, school district or school and must follow the guidelines outlined below. Any active member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is eligible for nomination. The selection committee shall be the REaD executive and at least one other external mediator. The recommendations for the award will be based upon the majority vote of the committee.

A maximum of one award may be presented annually for exemplary teaching. This award winner will receive a REaD plaque. A maximum of ten

awards may be presented annually for distinguished teaching. These winners will receive a REaD pin for distinguished teaching. The recipients will be notified by the President of REaD by telephone and by letter. A copy of the letter will be forwarded to the recipient's Director of Education, NLTA Professional Development Officer and their school principal. Announcements containing information on the winner and the award will be published in *The Bulletin*. All nominees for the award will be sent a letter of recognition by the President of REaD.

The nomination package should contain:

- Record of teaching service and curriculum vitae;
- Description of any special projects led, initiated or supported by the nominee;
- Description of contributions in the area of curriculum development, curriculum support, and/or curriculum implementation in the discipline of English Language Arts;
- Listing of any other English Language Arts related activities;
- Listing of nominee's existing awards or honours;
- Three letters of support from colleagues who teach English Language Arts. These letters should contain contact information for each of the referees;
- Any other information or documents pertinent to the nomination.

All nominations must be forwarded to the President of REaD by **April 15**. Packages should be sent to Mr. Brian Vardy, Prince of Wales Collegiate, 24 Paton Street, St. John's, NL, A1B 3E7. For further information or to receive a nomination package, contact Brian Vardy, brianvardy@esdnl.ca Tel: 709-576-4061, or download a copy from the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca (go to "Recent Info" or click this link in the online issue of *The Bulletin*).

OTTAWA

Four Canadian unions sign pact to protect collective bargaining

On January 18, four of Canada's largest labour organizations formally signed a Mutual Aid and Assistance pact to promote and protect collective bargaining in Canada.

Leaders from the National Union of Public General Employees (NUPGE), the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW Canada), the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), and the Canadian Professional Police Association (CPPA) met in Ottawa on January 16 to sign the pact to protect collective bargaining rights for all Canadians.

The pact signatories recognize that freedom of association, and the right to organize and bargain collectively in Canada, are under significant pressure. Accordingly, the signatories have agreed to focus their cooperative efforts to enhance the ability of their combined organizations to prevent further erosion of these fundamental human rights.

Attending the signing were James Clancy, national president of NUPGE; Michael J. Fraser, national director of UFCW Canada; Winston Carter, president of the CTF; and David Griffin, Executive Officer of the CPPA.

"Over the past 20 years we've seen a serious erosion of our fundamental rights to bargain collectively and withdraw services if necessary, and it's our governments that are mostly to blame," says James Clancy of NUPGE.

"Rather than protecting our labour rights, federal and provincial governments have stood by silently and sometimes even provided the legal means to ignore and abuse these fundamental human rights," added Clancy.

Since 1982, Canadian governments have passed more than 170 regulations and laws to restrict or suspend collective bargaining rights for Canadian workers. According to Michael J. Fraser of the UFCW Canada, "this attack on the fundamental human right of freedom of association has hurt the labour movement's ability to organize non-union workers. I'm proud to be joining forces with NUPGE, CTF and the CPPA to help to reverse this situation."

David Griffin, executive officer of the CPPA, said the agreement between the groups is a welcome development within the labour movement in Canada. "Labour rights are human rights and governments can't cherry pick which human rights they want to protect and promote in a democracy," he said. "A right is a right and our elected leaders have a duty to stand up for the rights of all citizens."

For his part, Winston Carter, CTF president explained that teachers in many jurisdictions across the country have seen their governments interfere in the collective bargaining process with regressive pieces of legislation that go against international law. "What kind of lesson are we giving our children with respect to global citizenship when our very own governments fail to respect international labour law, time and time again?"

Combined, UFCW Canada, NUPGE, CTF and the CPPA represent over 800,000 working people across Canada.



CTF President, Winston Carter, signs Mutual Aid and Assistance pact.

CANADA

CTF and MNET launch Media Awareness Week

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and Media Awareness Network (MNet) are pleased to announce the launch of a National Media Education Week, November 19-24, 2006. The primary goal of the week is to highlight the importance of media and Web literacy as key learning areas in the information age.

To do this, CTF and MNet are working with the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO), the Association for Media Literacy (AML), Concerned Children's Advertisers (CCA), provincial teachers' associations and a number of education and community groups to profile media education leading up to and during National Media Education Week.

All stakeholders are encouraged to mark this occasion with a wide range of media education programs and professional development opportunities. For example:

- provincial media education organization could host panel discussions or workshops;
- educators could involve students in youth-based awareness-raising activities;
- public health organizations could conduct workshops on tobacco and alcohol advertising;
- human rights groups could deliver presentations on media representation;
- companies could sponsor employee or community information events;
- school boards and teacher associations could facilitate conference workshops for teachers;
- and libraries and parent councils could promote parent workshops on Internet literacy and managing media in the home.

To help coordinate this event, the CTF has created a portal (www.ctf-fce.ca/nationalmediaeducationweek/default.htm) on its web site that provides information about upcoming events and links to a wide range of media education resources to support activities and programs to recognize the week.

CTF and MNet invite you to join them in promoting and celebrating National Media Education Week.

For more information, contact Cathy Wing, Acting Director of Education, MNet, (613) 224-7721, ext. 227 or Francine Filion, CTF Director of Communications, (613) 232-1505, ext. 130.

EDWARD COMBDEN, 1941 - 2005



Ed Combden, career teacher and outdoor enthusiast, was born in Barr'd Island, Fogo Island, one of ten children. He completed his early education on the island, graduating from the Central High School in Joe Batt's Arm. Ed completed his professional training at Memorial University graduating with a BA.Ed in 1966.

Ed's career was always spent in the classroom, teaching at Capstan Island, and L'Anse au Loup, Labrador, moving on to Fogo Island, New Harbour, Corner Brook completing his career at Grant Collegiate where he served for 23 years.

He married Valerie Sheppard from Big Bay and raised three children. Ed's greatest love was his family and friends. He was well respected by each generation of students and a cherished member of the staff, serving on various professional committees and a willing supporter of the sports programs.

Ed was active in the community, serving on the Governing Board of St. Luke's Anglican Church in Springdale. He was also a member of the Springdale Curling Club where he enjoyed the game and socializing. Ed contributed to Minor Hockey, softball and served on the executive of the Blue Fin Swim Team.

His retirement years were spent enjoying his grandchildren and roaming the woods, hunting, rabbit catching, berry picking and reveling in the beauty and solitude of nature.

His former students, peers, friends and family treasure his legacy.

(Submitted by Mel Pike, staff member, former Grant Collegiate.)

ELLEN BROWN, 1935 - 2006



My mother, Ellen Brown, began her teaching career at the age of 16. By today's standards she would be allowed to drive a car, with adult supervision, but she would never be expected to have the where-with-all to manage a class of elementary students of varying ages, grades and abilities without adult supervision, day in and day out. But I guess in the 1950s when she began her 32-year career as a primary/elementary teacher, no one questioned her ability to do just that – not even her.

She taught in many schools in Newfoundland including ones in Channel, Harbour Deep, Jackson's Arm, Lamaline, Topsail, and finally R.T. Harvey Elementary in Baie Verte from 1970-89. I would never

consider myself an expert on anyone's teaching, but not only did I have the rare opportunity to have my mother as a teacher in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and 2, but as a teacher myself, I was able to get a glimpse of my mother across the staffroom table when I taught as a substitute for a year. I never actually taught in her classroom because, of course, my mother never thought she was sick enough to take a day off work.

I remember watching her teach alongside Mrs. Boyle and Mrs. Lidstrom when all of the Grade 1 and 2 students were congregated together in the room fondly known as "the wing". If you try to imagine a room the size of two portables packed with more than 80 kids, aged 5 to 7, you might envision the Playplace at McDonalds on a Saturday afternoon. However, nothing could be further from the boot camp that was "the wing". I can vividly remember how we would separate two-ply tissues with other people in our groups so we would not miss the opportunity to earn a star on the Health Inspection Chart. And the little flutter of delight of moving up a level in SRA so we could finally use the aqua crayon to colour in the activity record boxes.

I thought my teachers were just patronizing me when they "oohed" and "aahed" over the homemade plum pudding Mom made me give them for Christmas. I secretly marveled though at the hundreds of times she crafted ornaments out of Phentix wool, a styrofoam ball and a roll of butterscotch candy in order to make a "Lifesaver man" for every student in her classes. I now realize what an accomplishment it was to work full-time, raise four children, and participate in school and community activities to the extent she did.

She was a strict teacher and a strict mother, so it never seemed odd to have her as both. She expected nothing more of her students and children than she expected of herself – hard work, dedication and excellence in everything. She taught all of the children in many families, including her own. As a teacher myself, I am learning from her still.

(Submitted by Deborah Keefe, Georgetown, Ontario.)

DARLENE HOWARD

On September 29, 2005, Darlene Howard's lengthy and courageous battle against breast cancer ended. She, however, lives on in the hearts and memories of all who loved and admired her.

Darlene was a special education teacher who thoroughly enjoyed her career. She cheerfully went to school every day and delighted her colleagues with her wit and humor and challenged her students to do their best! Darlene taught with laughter, patience,



and strength and she will be forever remembered for her dedication to her career.

Darlene began her teaching career in Terrenceville in 1983. In 1990 she moved to St. John's and made the daily overseas journey to St. Michael's High on Bell Island. Darlene also taught and made lasting friendships at St. Pats, St. John Bosco, Beaconsfield High School and Holy Spirit High. She enjoyed staff socials and her get togethers with the Bosco girls. While at Beaconsfield she took up curling, giving her all to fun and frolic – planning team uniforms and practicing shots with skittles on the staffroom table. She always demonstrated her strength and determination of a true champion when playing at the NLTA Funspiels and at tournaments. Darlene even went to Halifax for the 2003 Nokia Brier, never allowing the games to interfere with her mercantile therapy.

Darlene's professional life also included service as vice president of the Council of Special Services (COSS). She continued with her duties in this role even when her cancer had returned. Darlene was not one to renege on a commitment.

Darlene was an inspiration to all who met her and especially to those who knew her well. In spite of the many hurdles that her cancer presented, Darlene was always optimistic. She absolutely enjoyed every moment of her life and lived it with passion, honesty, and always with style. During her illness she ran two Tely 10 races and worked tirelessly, inspiring all who knew her to support the Run for the Cure. Darlene also loved to travel, shopped passionately, dressed impeccably, and spent all the time she could with family and friends.

Darlene chose to focus on her beliefs and blessings and unfailingly found joy when it was least apparent. Darlene loved her family dearly and cherished each moment with them. Her daughters Bailey and Sydney were her life, her pride and joy. Jeff, her husband, was a constant source of love and support. As well, all who knew Darlene, were blessed to have shared in her love. Through all of them, Darlene will live on.

Her indomitable spirit, determination and joyfulness are a lesson to us. Darlene lived and loved well, and in turn was well loved. She truly is an inspiration to all of us who had the pleasure of sharing her life. We miss her.

There's something happening in the sky.

I see my favorite face,

It chokes me up so fiercely,

And I'm filled with your light,

Soaked with your grace,

I'll dance all night

I've got to say goodbye.

– from *Sad October – Five for Fighting*

(Submitted by Lillian Bussey and Mary Kelsey, friends and colleagues.)



School Opening and Closing Dates

by EDWARD HANCOCK

The majority of teachers responding to a recent NLTA survey have indicated their preference to maintain the traditional opening and closing dates for the school year.

Last Spring, as a result of widespread debate among the membership concerning this matter, your Provincial Executive decided to conduct a province-wide survey of the membership to determine the wishes of the membership before any future discussion with the employer on this matter. This survey was conducted in the Fall of 2005. All NLTA school representatives received copies of a questionnaire to distribute to all teachers and completed questionnaires were to be collected by school representatives and returned to the NLTA Office for counting and tabulation.

The basis for undertaking the survey occurred in the 2004-05 school year when school opened on September 7, 2004 and closed on June 24, 2005. The later opening in September meant there was less flexibility for other holidays within the school year because there were fewer days between the school opening date in September and the closing date the following June (with a shorter Christmas break being one outcome). Teachers were asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 - 5 (most preferred to least preferred) to rank four possible options as follows:

1. Leave dates as they traditionally have been, opening on the Tuesday following Labour Day and closing on a Friday in the third or last week of June;
2. Start school earlier (on September 1) in years when Labour Day does not occur until September 5, 6, or 7;
3. Continue to start school after Labour Day but extend the school year later in June; and
4. Start school earlier and end school later in the year.

A total of 2,889 members responded to the survey. The results, on a province-wide basis, are as follows:

OPTION 1: LEAVE DATES AS THEY TRADITIONALLY HAVE BEEN

	1	2	3	4	5	N/O
Board Offices	33	10	5	4	10	5
Schools	1474	300	280	173	438	111
Subtotal	1507	310	285	177	448	116
* Others	16	3	8	3	15	1
TOTAL	1523	313	293	180	463	117

* OTHERS: HOSPITAL, NATIVE, OTHER, PRIVATE

**OPTION 2: START EARLIER, ON SEPTEMBER 1
(MORE HOLIDAYS WITHIN SCHOOL YEAR)**

	1	2	3	4	5	N/O
Board Offices	25	8	9	5	17	3
Schools	757	289	272	230	1054	174
Subtotal	782	297	281	235	1071	177
* Others	20	6	4	1	13	2
TOTAL	802	303	285	236	1084	179

* OTHERS: HOSPITAL, NATIVE, OTHER, PRIVATE

**OPTION 3: AFTER LABOUR DAY BUT EXTEND LATER IN JUNE
(MORE HOLIDAYS WITHIN SCHOOL YEAR):**

	1	2	3	4	5	N/O
Board Offices	5	5	2	11	38	6
Schools	311	162	253	310	1537	203
Subtotal	316	167	255	321	1575	209
* Others	7	5	6	1	26	1
TOTAL	323	172	261	322	1601	210

* OTHERS: HOSPITAL, NATIVE, OTHER, PRIVATE

OPTION 4: START SCHOOL EARLIER AND END SCHOOL LATER (MORE HOLIDAYS WITHIN SCHOOL YEAR):						
	1	2	3	4	5	N/O
Board Offices	4	6	3	3	44	7
Schools	90	75	158	205	2024	224
Subtotal	94	81	161	208	2068	231
* Others	11	2	4	4	23	2
TOTAL	105	83	165	212	2091	233

* OTHERS: HOSPITAL, NATIVE, OTHER, PRIVATE

Results were also broken down by school district. District results mirrored the provincial results in Districts 2, 3, and 4. In District 1 (Labrador), there was a greater preference expressed for Option 2 than for Option 1. In District 5 (Francophone School Board), practically all those who responded indicated a preference for Option 2.

Should the Department of Education continue the practice of opening on the Tuesday following Labour Day, an annual decision by the Department will still be required for the June closing date. Since the inception of our 195-day school year in 2002-03, that closing date has ranged from June 23 to June 27. The opening and closing dates for the four years since 2002-03 are as follows:

- 2002-03: September 3, 2002 - June 27, 2003
- 2003-04: September 2, 2003 - June 25, 2004
- 2004-05: September 7, 2004 - June 24, 2005
- 2005-06: September 2, 2005 - June 23, 2006

(Note: The Friday, September 2 opening in 2005-06 was adjusted to Tuesday, September 6, in the Western and Central Districts by scheduling an unpaid holiday on September 2 and having one less such holiday during the school year.)

The Department of Education has sought input from the NLTA and school districts prior to establishing opening and closing dates for the next several years. Some discussions between NLTA and Department representatives have already taken place, and the Department has been informed of the results of the NLTA survey. We anticipate that the dates for the next several years will be announced in the very near future.

Edward Hancock is Executive Director of the NLTA.



Statutory Review of the WHSCC

by PERRY DOWNEY

During the fall of 2000, the Provincial Government established a Workers' Compensation Task Force to review the entire Workers' Compensation system. During the spring of 2001, the NLTA and other interested stakeholders were invited to make presentations and to submit recommendations to the Task Force through a series of province-wide public consultation sessions. The primary focus of the Task Force, at that time, was to make recommendations to the Provincial Government that would address both the unfunded liability of the system, and how to improve the benefit levels provided to injured workers. The work of the Task Force concluded with a report entitled *Changing the Mind Set* being submitted to Government in February 2002. The document contained a number of recommendations from the Task Force which the Provincial Government endorsed and implemented by way of legislation in the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 1990 and the Occupational Health & Safety Act, 1990.

Prior to Christmas 2005, the NLTA received notification that a new Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission Statutory Review Committee had been established by the Provincial Government with a mandate to once again review the overall operations and functions of the Workers' Compensation system and to make recommendations to Government on ways and means of improving the current system. This Committee, Chaired by Mr. Bruce Peckford, scheduled a series of 14 public consultation sessions throughout the Province during the month of January 2006, beginning in Labrador City on January 9 and concluding in St. John's on January 31. In order to obtain input, the Committee invited interested parties, interested individuals, and interested stakeholders (both Employer and Employee organization representatives) to participate in the public consultation hearings and to make submissions, both verbal and/or written, to the Committee for its consideration. On January 24, I presented the Association's official position paper on the current system. The

document contained 20 recommendations that, if implemented by the Provincial Government, would result in significant improvements to the current system for teachers throughout the Province.

The Statutory Review Committee, by way of guidance to all presenters, provided all stakeholders with a document entitled *Finding the Balance*. This document gave an overview of the current system and provided a series of questions for which the Committee requested feedback. The document organized the questions under the following four areas: 1) Client Services; 2) Education; 3) Claims Management; and 4) Finances. In addition to responding to these four areas, the Association also requested that the Committee give very serious consideration to a fifth area entitled *Benefit Levels For Injured Workers*.

For the most part, many of the questions that were listed by the Committee simply required the Association to provide a response that incorporated both individual teachers' experiences with the system and the relationship that the Association has developed with the Commission, the Department of Education, and the school boards throughout the Province. In addition to providing commentary on these four areas, the NLTA also strongly recommended to the Committee that, given the nature of the teaching profession and the considerable increases we are seeing in workplace stress, stress-related illnesses must be recognized as a work-related injury and thus must be classified as a compensatory illness under the Act. For many teachers who have exhausted their sick leave benefits due to such illnesses, if this illness was recognized under the Act as compensatory, school boards, as the employers, throughout the province might reconsider the workload demands and expectations that they are currently placing on teachers. If they are forced to take responsibility for this issue, the boards might be more committed to developing pro-active strategies and to pressure the Provincial Government in an attempt to address the "root causes" of such illness, often medically deter-

mined to be caused by unrealistic, unreasonable, and in many cases, the unattainable workload demands that are "real" in the current education system.

Throughout its entire position paper, the NLTA constantly and consistently referenced the need for the Statutory Review Committee to focus much needed attention on the benefit levels paid to injured workers, especially teachers. The Association clearly demonstrated the major impact that the legislation of the early 1990s had on the teachers' Collective Agreement benefit known as "Injury on Duty". Prior to the legislative changes that were imposed by the Wells Government in the mid-1990s, teachers had negotiated a "top-up" provision which, if injured on duty, provided teachers with a salary equivalent to their pre-injury earnings level, i.e., there would be no decrease in one's "take-home pay" as a result of sustaining a work-related injury. The Association clearly demonstrated to the Committee the need to reverse this legislation by providing them with a "real life" example. Given that 23% of the teachers in the Province are currently earning a salary at the top of Certificate VII, the following example was provided to illustrate the impact that the legislation has had, and continues to have, on teachers. A teacher who is currently receiving a salary at the top of Certificate VII would receive a "take-home pay" benefit of approximately \$1,440 bi-weekly. If that same teacher were to sustain a work-related injury and were required to be away from work on a lost-time accident claim under Workers' Compensation, that same individual would have their "take home pay" reduced to approximately \$682 bi-weekly under the current Workers' Compensation wage-loss benefit calculation; a decrease of approximate 53%.

The Association also presented that currently there are approximately 88% of the teachers in our province who are in receipt of a salary that is greater than the caps that have been placed on the wage-loss benefit calculation by Workers' Compensation. The current caps are a maximum of 80% of "net income", based on an annual maximum insurable earnings salary level of \$46,275. As a result of these "mythical" caps, 88% of our teachers experience a considerable reduction in "take-home" pay on the first day of a lost-time accident claim. The Association, through statistical information obtained from the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), demonstrated that teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador receive the lowest wage-loss benefit of all teachers across Canada. In five of the 12 provinces or territories, for example, teachers have been exempted from the wage cap provisions of the Workers' Compensation legislation by their Provincial or Territorial Governments. In the other

seven provinces and territories, the percentage on which the net income is calculated and the amount used as the maximum insurable earnings level are much higher. Given these facts, the Association recommended both that caps be removed and the Workers' Compensation wage-loss benefits be based on 100% of a teacher's pre-injury earnings level, i.e., no reduction in "take-home pay" resulting from a work-related injury. The Association argued that if the Workers' Compensation system is to be truly a "cost neutral" system, then no injured worker should be expected to experience a "cost" associated with an injury and thus a reduction in wage-loss benefits as a result of sustaining a work-related injury.

Given the presentations that other employee representatives made to the Committee, it is very clear that one of the major concerns raised by injured workers is the rates on which the current wage-loss benefit is calculated. Many organizations and unions recommended that the wage-loss benefits calculation for injured workers be based on the individual's pre-injury level income, and not on the maximum caps of 80% and \$46,275. It was stated on a number of occasions throughout these hearings, as well as in the NLTA's position paper that: *We can still maintain a "cost-neutral", "no-fault", "non-reduced standard of living system" if the employers of this province pay the appropriate rates applicable to their experience rating on the actual pre-injury salaries paid to employees, rather than on the mythical \$46,275 amount currently established. If those who are responsible for the funding of any system take their responsibility seriously, no system should find itself in an unfunded situation. By legislatively taking away the negotiated benefits of injured workers to avail of sick leave benefits and/or "top-up" provisions in exchange for a system that is under-funded by those who are solely responsible, why should the injured worker be the one who suffers?* (NLTA Presentation to the Statutory Review Committee, Page 18).

Given that the Committee received approximately 140 written submissions from both the employers' and employees' perspectives, the Committee will need some time to review all the various documents and recommendations contained therein. By way of follow-up to these consultation sessions, the Statutory Review Committee also scheduled a "Round Table" discussion for February 20 for all stakeholders to once again meet and discuss the many issues that were raised during this process and to seek additional input and clarification on the many issues and concerns raised. The Statutory Review Committee is expected to have its written report to Government by the end of March.

The following is a summary of the list of recommendations that the NLTA submitted to the Statutory Review Committee for consideration.

1. The NLTA recommends that the role of both Workers' and Employers' Advisor be expanded to include direct assistance to the parties during the establishment and implementation of various requirements under both the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
2. The NLTA recommends that the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission establish a Client Relations Office to oversee the Client Services component of the present system.
3. The NLTA recommends that additional Commissioners be appointed throughout the Province with the authority to consider disputes and to render a decision in an expedited manner.
4. The Department of Education shall provide an additional position designated as an Occupational Health and Safety Coordinator to each school district throughout the Province. The primary responsibility of the Coordinator will be to ensure that the Occupational Health and Safety Act is implemented as intended. The Coordinator will also be responsible for ensuring that an educational awareness program is developed and presented to all employees in the school system through a series of organized professional development seminars scheduled during the regular work day.
5. Employers covered by the Workers' Compensation Act shall provide adequate time and resources during the defined workday for each employee to actively participate in health and safety preventative workplace strategy programs.
6. An Occupational Health and Safety Audit shall be developed and implemented at all work sites outlining a minimum standard for health and safety practices and programs which must be met and maintained in order for the Employer to qualify and continue to qualify for PRIME.
7. An annual Occupational Health and Safety Audit shall be conducted at each work site at the end of each work year to determine the health and safety concerns/needs of the employees. Appropriate preventative health and safety training practices and programs shall be developed and implemented to address the concerns/needs identified by the employees.
8. A minimum of one Occupational Health and Safety inspection shall be completed at each work site by the Occupational Health and Safety Committee or Worker Health and Safety Representative each year and the results and needs of each work site shall be identified during the inspection and included in the Occupational Health and Safety Audit.
9. The rate of Workers' Compensation wage-loss benefits paid to an injured worker shall be 100% of pre-injury net income earnings.

10. Workers' Compensation wage-loss benefit calculations shall be based on an injured worker's total net salary and there shall be no maximum salary level established on which the benefit is calculated.

11. The Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act be amended in order that the legislation not interfere with negotiated "top-ups" to the level of Workers' Compensation benefits.

12. Injured workers, while awaiting the final decision on a Workers' Compensation application, shall be permitted to access sick leave benefits, if available, without having to repay the daily rate difference between sick leave benefits and the wage-loss benefits as calculated by Workers' Compensation.

13. In instances where an employer refuses to implement the recommendations of a health care provider, the injured worker shall receive the same wages or salary and benefits that they would have earned had they not been injured.

14. In instances where an employer has not developed an Early and Safe Return-to-Work program or policy, an injured worker shall continue to receive the same wages or salary and benefits that they would have earned had they not been injured.

15. Stress-related illnesses shall be recognized as a legitimate compensatory work-related illness under the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act.

16. A thorough review of the present Classification of Industries & Assessment Rates structure be conducted with emphasis on developing a structure which reflects the true risks associated with each occupation defined in the employer rate groupings.

17. A biennial review of the Classification of Industries & Assessment Rates structure be conducted to evaluate whether or not the employer rate groupings are sufficient to offset the true costs and risks associated with each occupation.

18. The premiums paid to the Workers' Compensation System by each employer shall be calculated based on the applicable rate of assessment and the total gross income earnings of all employees.

19. All monetary benefits payable under Workers' Compensation to an injured worker shall be increased annually at a rate greater than or equivalent to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate for the given year.

20. A thorough review of the Workers' Compensation investment portfolio shall be conducted with the primary emphasis on increasing investment revenues.

Perry Downey is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA. He is the Staff Officer responsible for addressing Workers' Compensation and Occupational Health and Safety concerns for teachers.

CONTACT 2006

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Guidelines and application forms for CONTACT 2006 are available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca. Go to "Forms Online" or by calling the Professional Development Division of the NLTA at 709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, Beverley Park (ext. 244), bpark@nlta.nl.ca, Susan Cardoulis (ext. 246), scardoulis@nlta.nl.ca

NOTE: Teachers must forward applications to their Branch by April 24th. Branches must submit their nominations to the NLTA by May 1st.

CONTACT is sponsored by the teacher organizations of the Atlantic Region.



Prince Edward Teachers'





Net Teacher Pension Income

by DON ASH

We periodically receive requests from active teachers for a breakdown or comparison of the "take-home" pay they would receive as a pensioner compared with what they are receiving as an active teacher. The NLTA and Pensions Division will not do individual take-home calculations because individual personal circumstances impact take-home pay. As well, tax rates and group insurance premiums are subject to change. The following calculations are offered for illustrative purposes and are not estimates or guarantees of individual take-home pay.

The attached tables are based on a teacher at the top of Certificate V, Certificate VI and Certificate VII retiring in June 2006 with a total of 33.8 years of pensionable service (e.g. 29.8 worked years plus 4 years of university buy-back).

It is important to note that these tables do not represent a guarantee of the level of net retirement income which a teacher will receive. The tables are generated based on a number of assumptions, including the following:

1. The teacher is retiring with 33.8 years of pensionable service.
2. The pension calculation assumes the full accrual for all years (2.22% prior to January 1, 1991 and 2% since January 1, 1991 except the 1993-94 fiscal year). In 1993-94, a teacher's accrual will be 0.75% less as a result of government's reduced contribution to the pension during the 1993-94 fiscal year (unless the teacher 'topped up' government's reduced contribution).
3. The estimated group insurance deductions include the Basic/Dependent Life, Basic AD&D, Family Health, and Family Dental premiums at May 2005 premium rates. A teacher's other coverages and premium increases would change that estimated deduction.

It should also be noted that pension payroll is based on 24 pay periods per annum and not the 26 pay periods on which the Teacher Payroll system operates.

As the tables indicate, deductions for Canada Pension Plan premiums, Employment Insurance premiums, Teachers' Pension Plan contributions, and NLTA fees are not applied to pension income. The only two

deductions applied to the illustrated pension income are income tax and group insurance premiums.

The maximum annual Canada Pension premium for 2006 is \$1,910.70. The maximum annual EI premium for 2006 is \$729.30. Active teachers will not have CPP or EI premium deductions after these annual amounts have been paid.

Individual teachers should consult directly with a tax planner or investment advisor if they are looking for a definitive statement concerning income figures applicable to their own circumstances upon retirement.

TEACHER - TOP OF CERTIFICATE V (RETIRING JUNE 2006)

Annual Salary		\$51,985
Per Pay Period		\$1,999
Deductions	CPP*	\$92.31
	EI*	\$37.39
	TPP	\$186.90
	Income Tax	\$412.55
	NLTA Fees	\$24.99
	Insurance	\$69.84
Net Pay (26 periods)		\$1,175
Annual Net Pay	\$1,175 X 26	\$30,550

*Maximum annual CPP and EI premiums are approximately paid by the 20th pay period. No CPP or EI premiums are paid on the remaining 6 pay periods, which will increase annual net pay.

Accrued pension percentage		70.88%
Average Salary (5 years)		\$49,970
Annual Pension	.7088 X \$49,970	\$35,418
Per Pay Period		\$1,476
Deductions	Income Tax	\$301.70
	Insurance	\$68.43
Net Pay (24 periods)		\$1,105
Annual Net Pension	\$1,105 X 24	\$26,540
Annual Net Difference*		\$30,550 - \$26,540 = \$4,009

*The annual net difference does not reflect the higher net pay for an active teacher after maximum annual CPP and EI premiums have been paid.

TEACHER - TOP OF CERTIFICATE VI (RETIRING JUNE 2006)

Annual Salary		\$60,212
Per Pay Period		\$2,315
Deductions	CPP*	\$107.97
	EI*	\$43.31
	TPP	\$216.45
	Income Tax	\$516.60
	NLTA Fees	\$28.94
	Insurance	\$70.56
Net Pay (26 periods)		\$1,331
Annual Net Pay	\$1,331 X 26	\$34,606
*Maximum annual CPP and EI premiums paid by the 17th pay period. No CPP or EI premiums are paid on the remaining 9 pay periods, which will increase annual net pay.		
Accrued pension percentage		70.88%
Average Salary (5 years)		\$57,878
Annual Pension	.7088 X \$57,878	\$41,024
Per Pay Period		\$1,709
Deductions	Income Tax	\$388.20
	Insurance	\$68.94
Net Pay (24 periods)		\$1,251
Annual Net Pension	\$1,251 X 24	\$30,024
Annual Net Difference*	\$34,606 - 30,024 =	\$4,582
*The annual net difference does not reflect the higher net pay for an active teacher after maximum annual CPP and EI premiums have been paid.		

TEACHER - TOP OF CERTIFICATE VII (RETIRING JUNE 2006)

Annual Salary		\$68,117
Per Pay Period		\$2,619
Deductions	CPP*	\$123.02
	EI*	\$48.99
	TPP	\$244.88
	Income Tax	\$628.45
	NLTA Fees	\$32.74
	Insurance	\$71.24
Net Pay (26 periods)		\$1,469
Annual Net Pay	\$1,469 X 26	\$38,211
*Maximum annual CPP and EI premiums paid by the 15th pay period. No CPP or EI premiums are paid on the remaining 11 pay periods, which will increase annual net pay.		
Accrued pension percentage		70.88%
Average Salary (5 years)		\$65,477
Annual Pension	.7088 X \$65,477	\$46,410
Per Pay Period		\$1,933
Deductions	Income Tax	\$470.70
	Insurance	\$69.37
Net Pay (24 periods)		\$1,392
Annual Net Pension	\$1,392 X 24	\$33,408
Annual Net Difference*	\$38,211 - 33,408 =	\$4,803
*The annual net difference does not reflect the higher net pay for an active teacher after maximum annual CPP and EI premiums have been paid.		

Note:

- These numbers represent estimates only and are not intended as a specific calculation of any teacher's net pension income (see earlier comments).
- Teachers retiring with fewer than 33.8 pensionable years are cautioned that the pension income will be lower and therefore these net difference figures will be more substantial in their cases.

In addition to the above, teachers sometimes inquire about the effect on their pension income, should they decide to continue teaching for another year or two. There are two factors which impact the pension calculation in working another year. A teacher's pension accrual rate will be 2% higher for every additional year worked and the five-year average salary applied to the accrual will usually be higher because of the higher salary in the last year worked when compared to salary earned five years ago. Teachers are encouraged to

visit the Virtual Teacher Centre at www.virtualteachercentre.ca and use the pension estimator to help in this calculation.

Inquiries on any of the above information should be directed to an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division or to personnel in the Pensions Division at the Department of Finance.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division at the NLTA.

Thinking About Retirement?

by DON ASH

Under the Teachers' Pension Act, a teacher is eligible for pension benefit:

- (a) At age 60 with between five and 24 years of pensionable service.
 - (b) At age 55 or after with at least 25 years of pensionable service.
 - (c) After completing 30 years of worked service* regardless of age.
 - (d) Reduced pension with 29 years of worked service and at least 30 years of pensionable service. Pension will be reduced based on the number of months a teacher will be retired prior to reaching age 55.
- (*Worked service refers to all pensionable service except university study buy-back that could be purchased prior to 1991.)

- ☐ Apply for teachers' pension by completing the appropriate *Teachers' Pension Application*.
- ☐ Complete the *Direct Deposit Form* and submit to Pensions Division.
- ☐ Apply for severance pay by completing the *Severance Payment Request Form*.
- ☐ Confirm/consult with Johnson Incorporated on Group Insurance coverage (Tel: 1-800-563-1528).
- ☐ Consider joining the Retired Teachers' Association by completing the application form and submitting it to the Pensions Division.
- ☐ Consider seeking personal financial advice regarding financial decisions related to retirement.
- ☐ Keep your mind active and your body healthy. Enjoy life!

VTC Access to Pension Estimator

Teachers now have access to a pension estimator through the Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC) at www.virtualteachercentre.ca. Using the pension benefit statement a teacher can obtain an estimate of his/her expected pension at the chosen point of retirement.

Checklist for Retiring Teachers

The following checklist is designed to assist teachers as they participate and plan for this upcoming life phase change.

- ☐ Apply to NLTA to attend a pre-retirement seminar up to two years prior to your year of retirement.
- ☐ Confirm the eligible date of your retirement with the Pensions Division at the pre-retirement seminar or by contacting Pensions Division.
- ☐ Submit your resignation to School District (**do not** resign until eligibility has been confirmed): one month notice is required if retirement is to occur before Christmas; three months notice (March 31) is required if retirement is to occur after Christmas.

Changes Effective Upon Retirement

- NLTA Membership status changes from Active Membership to Life or Associate Membership.
- Access to the services and benefits of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) terminates.
- Basic Life Insurance coverage reduces to twice annual pension from twice annual salary (provided coverage is maintained and premiums paid), terminates at age 65, and is replaced by a members only \$15,000 benefit after age 65.
- Eligibility for EI ceases (unless a person becomes a "re-established worker" or is on a forced medical retirement).

Any questions or comments can be directed to an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Teacher Salaries A Cross-Canada Comparison

The following is a comparison of teacher salaries at the highest pay category in teacher salary scales across Canada as of September 1, 2005. The figures

are the most current available and were provided to the NLTA by the Canadian Teachers' Federation. A more detailed comparison of major teacher salary scales in Canada is regularly carried out by CTF and is published in its *Economic and Member Services Notes*.

Salary information contained below is based on province-wide salary scales for the four Atlantic provinces, Quebec and Saskatchewan, while Territorial agreements are shown for the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. For the remaining four provinces, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, local collective agreements are in effect and a sample of salary scales from some of the largest urban centres is included.

Province/ Territory	Agreement	Salary Category	Minimum	Maximum	Steps	Avg. Increment Min. to Max.	
						(\$)	(%)
NL	Provincial*	VII	\$51,206	\$68,117	10	\$1,879	3.2%
PE	Provincial	CVI	\$42,254	\$64,370 ¹	11 ¹	\$2,212	4.3%
NS	Provincial* ²	TC8 ³	\$48,653	\$72,823	11	\$2,417	4.1%
NB	Provincial	CVI	\$42,964	\$66,111	11	\$2,315	4.4%
QC ⁴	Provincial	19 yrs.	\$42,331	\$63,527	12	\$1,927	3.8%
ON	<u>Elementary:</u> Ottawa-Carleton ⁵	A4	\$44,949	\$79,079	12	\$3,103	5.3%
	Toronto	A4	\$46,289	\$79,128	11	\$3,284	5.5%
	<u>Secondary:</u> Ottawa-Carleton	A4	\$46,268	\$79,079	11	\$3,281	5.5%
	<u>Elementary-Secondary:</u> London Catholic	A4	\$43,018	\$79,072	11	\$3,605	6.3%
MB	Winnipeg	7	\$50,073	\$76,196	10	\$2,903	4.8%
SK	Provincial ⁶	VI	\$45,331	\$68,775	10	\$2,605	4.7%
AB	Calgary Public	F	\$49,828	\$75,956	11	\$2,613	4.3%
	Edmonton Public	6	\$51,336	\$77,976	11	\$2,664	4.3%
BC	Vancouver ⁷	6M	\$46,917	\$70,397	11	\$2,348	4.1%
YT	Territorial	VI	\$57,836	\$83,082	11	\$2,525	3.7%
NT	G.N.W.T. ⁸	6	\$62,837	\$90,665	12	\$2,530	3.4%
NU	Territorial	6	\$61,628	\$88,058	12	\$2,403	3.3%

* Contract expired. Currently in negotiations. Salaries shown are those in effect at the end of an agreement that expired prior to September 1, 2005.

¹ On September 1, 2005 the salary at the 10th and highest step in P.E.I. was \$62,067; however, since the salary grid in question covers the period from September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006, the maximum reported in the table is the 11th step which will be available effective April 1, 2006.

² Conciliator appointed January 2006.

³ The highest pay category (TC8) for Nova Scotia requires a doctoral degree.

⁴ As of September 1, 2005, a single salary structure came into effect and the minimum salary for teachers with 19 years of schooling and no experience represented Step 7 of the 17-step scale, for a total of 11 steps. However, as an exception, the salary rate of a teacher with 19 years of schooling and 14 years of experience or more was \$63,527 on September 1, 2005, which represents the 12th step.

⁵ Applies to teachers on staff after May 1, 2001. Note that for teachers on staff as of May 1, 2001, there were 11 steps and the minimum salary was \$46,192 while the maximum salary was the same at \$79,079.

⁶ Salaries represent the total of basic salary plus a salary adjustment.

⁷ Bill 12, the Teachers' Collective Agreement Act, imposed a wage freeze extending the existing contract ending June 30, 2004, to June 30, 2006.

⁸ Applies to teachers outside Yellowknife. Teachers in the Yellowknife Public and Catholic School Districts each have separate salary scales.



Employment Insurance Update

by STEFANIE TUFF

The purpose of this article is to provide information on some recent developments in Employment Insurance.

Increase in Allowable Earnings while Receiving EI Benefits

Effective December 11, 2005, the EI Commission initiated a three-year Pilot Project in areas of the country with high regional rates of unemployment, including the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Currently, EI claimants are allowed to earn \$50 or 25% of their weekly benefit rate (whichever is greater) before dollar for dollar reductions in their benefits take effect. Under the Pilot Project, the allowable earnings threshold is increased to \$75 or 40% of the weekly EI benefits rate (whichever is greater). This change applies in all regions of this province and is available for claimants of regular, parental or compassionate care benefits.

For example, ordinarily, a claimant who receives \$400 per week in EI benefits can earn up to \$100 (25%) per week before earnings are deducted, dollar for dollar. Under the Pilot Project, the same claimant can earn up to \$160 per week while on claim, with no deduction in benefits. In particular, this could be a benefit for young/new substitute teachers who are working while on an EI claim, especially in a week where they only get one day (or less) of work (the current daily rate of pay for a first year substitute teacher with a Level V teaching certificate is approximately \$154).

Decrease in Required Insurable Hours for New Entrants and Re-Entrants

The EI Commission has also launched a second three-year Pilot Project, effective December 11, 2005. This initiative also applies in regions with high rates of unemployment, including Newfoundland and Labrador. The current EI regime requires new entrants (first-time claimants) or re-entrants (claimants who have been out of the EI system for two years or more) to have 910 hours of insurable employment to qualify for regular benefits. Under the Pilot Project,

new entrants and re-entrants will need only 840 hours of work to qualify for regular EI benefits. Since a day of teaching is reported as eight hours of insurable employment for EI purposes, during the Pilot Project, teacher claimants who are new/re-entrants will need 104 days of teaching to accumulate 840 hours (as opposed to 114 days for 910 hours). This could have a positive impact on the ability of some replacement and substitute teachers to qualify for EI benefits. This Pilot Project has no impact on the hours required to qualify for special benefits (maternity, parental, sickness, compassionate care), which remains at 600 hours (75 teaching days).

Parental Benefits During the Summer

This issue does not relate to any new projects or developments. However, in our work with teachers, staff in the Benefits and Economic Services division have noticed that some teachers may not be aware of their entitlement to EI parental benefits during the non-teaching periods. Maternity and parental benefits are the only type of EI benefits that teachers can receive during the non-teaching periods (with the exception of substitute and replacement teachers who may qualify for regular benefits during those times). Receipt of "hold-back" pay does not impact on a teacher claiming maternity or parental benefits during the summer and it is important for new parents to be aware of any financial benefits they may avail of.

I'll use an example to illustrate this point: a male teacher is a new father. His spouse is not a teacher and will be going back to work at the end of June; however, she only took eight months off, so there are still roughly four months of parental benefits left that can be claimed by either parent. The teacher can therefore claim EI parental benefits for the months of July and August, even if he will not be taking any actual time off work. Another example would be that of a female teacher who has a baby early in September. She takes some maternity leave, but decides to return to work in April, after the Easter break, although she has not claimed the full 35 weeks of available parental benefits. At the end of June, she can resume her claim and collect EI parental benefits during July and August.

If you have any questions regarding these issues or require assistance in relation to an EI claim, please contact an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division.

Stefani Tuff is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Guiding Principles for Peer Evaluation

by LLOYD HOBBS

Within the Professional Growth and Improvement Model of some districts there exists the practice of colleagues evaluating or appraising the professional performance of their peers whether classroom teachers, school administration or program specialists. This sometimes raises questions which get directed to the staff of the NLTA. This article is intended to clarify your Association's position on this topic.

All teachers in this province who are members of the NLTA are bound by our Code of Ethics. All teachers should be familiar with this code and use it as a guiding document in their professional practice. Copies should be available in every school or it can be accessed electronically at www.nlta.nl.ca (go to "Publications", then to "Act, By-Laws and Code of Ethics - Page 32").

As professionals, teachers have a responsibility to help colleagues develop professionally, to give assistance and advice as needed or requested. However, one must be sensitive to the differences in assistance or advice versus criticism of professional competence. The NLTA, like other professional organizations, supports this practice of peers supporting peers as long as it meets certain basic principles as outlined in our Code of Ethics.

The following conditions should exist in a peer evaluation environment:

- The teacher under evaluation must be a willing participant in peer evaluation and must ask his/her colleagues to be part of his/her evaluation.
- The evaluation results must go to the colleague being evaluated unless he/she requests they be shared with others.
- Peers should not say anything of a critical nature about a colleague to others that one is not prepared to say first to that colleague.

Why do we place such conditions on the process? It is because of our Teacher-Colleagues section of the Code of Ethics which states:

(ii) A teacher does not criticize the professional competence or professional reputation of a colleague, except to proper officials and then only in confidence and after the

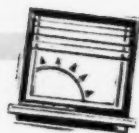
colleague has been informed of the criticism; and
(vii) A teacher, before making any report on the professional competence of a colleague, provides that colleague with a copy of the report and forwards with it any written comment that the colleague chooses to make.

As professionals, we are bound by our Code of Ethics. While we would expect the employer to adhere to this code, it is not bound in the same way and may request your participation in peer evaluation under conditions different than those referenced above. When we have questioned board personnel in the past, we have been told that teachers can choose whether or not they complete such questionnaires. Our advice is clear. You should not participate in peer evaluation unless it meets the conditions referenced above and it adheres to our Code of Ethics.

Should you have any questions on this topic, please contact a member of the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

Lloyd Hobbs is Assistant Executive Director of the NLTA.





Sometimes the Answer is *No*

by MARIE WALL

For such a small word *no* can be very powerful and one that causes difficulty for many people. Being able to say *no* to others and to oneself is a necessity. And learning to accept a negative response from others is also a challenge. This article will explore the dynamics of saying *no*, how to use it effectively and how to cope when others say *no* to you.

If you are a person who always wants to please others or feel guilty for inconveniencing others, you may have a problem saying *no*. If you have a hard time standing up for yourself or agree to do things you don't want to do you may struggle with setting personal boundaries. If you are unable to make desired changes in your own life such as health or financial changes you may be unable to say *no* to yourself. And if you take things personally and feel hurt if others say *no* to you, you may be struggling with accepting other people's limits. Whether it is your ability to set boundaries or respect the boundaries of others, developing these skills can make your relationships and your life more fulfilling because the choices you make will be more honest and the commitment more solid.

"If you are a person who always wants to please others or feel guilty for inconveniencing others, you may have a problem saying *no*."

It was not always difficult to say *no*. As children we learned the word and used it regularly. Think about a two-year-old who says it forcefully and often. So what changes? As a child grows, adults often teach the child that it is not always nice to say *no*. And there are times when children are told to do things which they find uncomfortable, to hug or kiss Auntie 'good-bye' for example. These actions seem innocent enough, but in reality they are setting the seeds of

poor boundaries from a very early age. Consider your childhood for a moment. How permissible was it for you to say *no* in your family?

Learning how to say *no* and set boundaries is difficult, but this behavior can help you be healthier, less stressed and more committed when you say *yes*. When you begin to change this behavior it may feel awkward and uncomfortable, but in time it becomes easier and more comfortable, for you and others.

Others will also be happier when you learn to set boundaries. When a person is a 'people pleaser' those around them are often uncertain where they stand on an issue or project. This is because there is often a sense of doom or heaviness about them, since there may be resentment, reluctance or non-commitment. When you learn to say *no* your *yes* becomes stronger. You will learn to deal with the initial discomfort and learn to appreciate the clarity.

Saying *No* to Others

There are three stages in learning to say *no* to others: awareness, practice and validation. The awareness that pleasing others can take a personal toll is the first step. Being overextended, feeling resentful or regretful and wanting to avoid others are indicators that your stress level is on bust. Thoughts like "I should never have agreed to this" are indicators that the negative experience of not setting boundaries is outweighing the benefits of pleasing others.

Often the first step to change is reneging on a commitment you have agreed to. You get into a project and realize you just can't fulfill the demands. When you let others know, it feels extremely uncomfortable because you feel you have let them down. On the other hand, there is such relief and self-confidence that it enhances your sense of pride. It is this positive feeling that re-enforces the new behavior. It is the sense of personal power that encourages you to try it again. Also, the realization that others can and will do what they can, shows you that things will get done.

With this reinforcement you will be able to begin

to assess what you can commit to and what you are unable to put your full energy behind. At this stage others are more able to relax with you and accept your decisions. It is important to be patient with others when you make these changes. They have experienced you in a particular way for a long period of time. These changes do affect them and the changes are being imposed. Stay the course. They will catch up.

If you are worried that learning to set your limits by saying *no* means you will never be involved again, don't worry. When you learn to care for yourself in this way you will agree to the commitments to which you can say *yes* and enjoy doing them with a heart and a half.

Internal Boundaries

Listening to oneself is a key to setting boundaries. We need to pay attention to the aspects of internal boundaries; the ability to limit ourselves, to say *no* to ourself and to accept someone else's *no* without taking it personally. Developing these behaviors and responding comfortably is empowering.

We are so used to saying *yes* that we often overextend ourselves without considering the consequences. If offered food we may feel obliged to eat it, even if we are full. The thought is, "if it is available, have it". We do this financially as well. If we want it, we just get it. There is no sense that it is okay to delay getting what we want. This is an 'I deserve it' attitude, even if the long-term pain is harmful. Assessing *need* versus *want* will help to set internal limits. We need to make the decision that when it is a need, have it or get it; when it is a want, decide if and when you will get it.

Learning to say *no* to oneself can be uncomfortable. Initially it can be just as uncomfortable as beginning to say it to others. An example is when deciding to change spending habits with the goal to becoming more financially sound. Learning and putting into practice *need* versus *want* is a process of setting limits. It is internal because no one is imposing this on you; it is a commitment you make to yourself. Feeling empowered and proud of making such decisions is the positive experience that will encourage you to continue this way.

Internal boundaries also include the ability to accept other people's limits and their response to you. Feeling rejected when you are given a negative response or hesitating to ask for other's assistance because they may say *no* are indicators that you have poor internal boundaries. It is necessary to separate yourself from the response given. We have to accept that sometimes the answer is *no* and would be *no* no matter who was making the request. There are circumstances that you may not be aware of and this may influence the

response. One example is if your administrator turns down a request for professional development. It would be understandable to feel disappointed but it is important not to take it personally. The administrator may have to consider the bigger picture, and while you may want and/or need professional development, there may be legitimate reasons for the refusal. If you do get a *no* from someone, consider whether there is anything further in your control. If there is, do something about it; if there is not, let it go and move on.

Sometimes the answer is *no*, whether it is saying *no* to someone else, to yourself or accepting it from another person. It is important to learn to deal with a negative response, whether it be from you or someone else. Being able to set limits is empowering and clearly informs others of your position. Being able to say *no* to yourself enables you to achieve desired goals. Finally, learning to accept *no* from others, without taking it personally, opens up honest communication with co-workers, family and friends.

Marie Wall is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Marie Wall (ext. 265) or Claudette Coombs (ext. 242).



A New Federal Government Opportunities and Challenges for Teachers in Canada

by WINSTON CARTER

The election of a new federal government has opened the door to some challenges as well as opportunities for the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) as we continue to pursue education-related priority issues at the national level. The new composition of the House of Commons will undoubtedly require the minority Conservative government to re-evaluate its policy platform and negotiate compromises with Opposition members of the House on issues where common ground can be found.

Issues such as tax cut proposals, respect for provincial/territorial jurisdiction, the fiscal imbalance, child care initiatives, government accountability mechanisms, international cooperation including foreign aid and trade, immigration settlement resources, minimum sentences for serious crimes, aboriginal issues, copyright legislation and health care waiting times, offer potential for compromise and agreement between the government and one or more of the opposition parties. Such agreements and compromises could have positive or negative implications for public education and related services.

This is why it will be critical for CTF and Member organizations including the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association to monitor and influence policy development as our issues are raised in the next term. CTF along with its coalition partners will also be working to sustain and augment levels of development assistance to meet Canada's global responsibilities.

But first, an essential part of our work will consist of studying the perspectives of the new government, opposition parties, members of their political staff and the bureaucracy. To position teacher issues that resonate with decision-makers, the CTF Executive and Board will also develop a strategy which will include key messages and a communication plan to further advance our position.

Current CTF priorities focus on ensuring that CTF, as a national voice for teachers, advocates for

public education here and abroad. Issues related to the health and well-being of children, youth and their families as well as international development, are paramount to CTF and its Member organizations. They range from Aboriginal Youth education, Copyright and the use of the Internet in the classroom, children and youth with physical and mental challenges, Francophone children in a minority context, Immigrant and Refugee children, and international trade agreements to Canada's commitment to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

CTF issues that run parallel with the federal government's agenda have potential support from one or more of the opposition parties. More sophisticated long-term strategies to help build public support will need to be developed for those issues considered more difficult to achieve.

CTF must maintain its reputation as a credible player by strategically earning, conserving and expending our political capital on issues that are of greatest importance to teachers. CTF looks forward to working with the NLTA and other Member organizations in monitoring policy development and in reminding the federal government of its promises to Canadian teachers that were published in our report, *Federal Party Leaders: Our Questions – Their Replies*.

Collectively, our work will promote the need for quality public education services. These actions will undoubtedly have a positive ripple effect for our Members in their efforts to improve learning conditions for students and working conditions for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as across Canada.

Winston Carter is President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.



Yes, I Still Want To Be a Teacher!

by ADAM CARDOULIS

Do you still want to be a teacher? That was the question that more than one teacher asked me this past year during my internship. Actually, now that I think about it, I was asked that question almost every day. It was as if people were expecting me to decide on another career whenever I hit a bump in the road and, trust me, there were bumps around every corner. I had my placement in an inner city school in an elementary grade and, whenever I explained this to my classmates, their eyes would bulge wide open, and they would mumble something along the lines of "Oh ... good luck with that." I knew I wanted to be a teacher and was deterred by none of this; I had set my goal of becoming a teacher, and I wasn't about to throw it away because of the anxiety of others. I knew it was going to be fun.

During my time at Memorial in the Faculty of Education, I had periodically wondered if it was the right career choice for me. My friends were all going to Alberta and would talk for hours about how much money they were going to make. Or I would remember one of the hundreds of conversations I had heard about how all the money being made these days in trades such as electrical work or contracting. Contracting was always the big one; just hearing the difference in salary was enough to make you grind your teeth, but I knew I wanted to teach. I had to ignore everything I was hearing about job prospects and salary and just think about making a difference in a child's life. I knew I had made the right choice the first time that I had set foot in a primary classroom ... a place I hadn't been since I was 10 years old.

I am not exaggerating when I say this – the kids treated me like I was a sports hero or a rock star, and all I was doing was telling them how to spell a word or showing them how to subtract five from seven. It was a strange feeling being treated this way. I wondered if it was because I was a man in a role traditionally held by females, was it because I was young (I was 22 at the time), or was it because I was just new to them? I know now that it was a mixture of all of these factors that led to their enthusiasm, and

it wasn't just the kids – almost every female teacher I met would whisper, "You know, we really need more men in primary; they don't have nearly enough role models, we're glad you're here." That was always a pick-me-up whenever the doubts would begin to resurface, but the biggest pick-me-up of all was that first day in a primary classroom when an eight-year-old boy handed me a note as I left for the day. "Don't ever change," it said. "You are like God to me." My eyes almost popped out of my face, and a few colourful expressions repeated themselves inside my head. It was an eye-opener for how much of an influence you can be without even realizing it.

I was reminded of my level of influence repeatedly during my internship. A parent would inform my cooperating teacher that her child was beginning to enjoy coming to school because of me. Or I would begin to see improvement in a weak student's performance after thinking about something that I had explained to them. I knew early on in the term that I had made the right choice. I could do this, and I could enjoy doing it; however, it was still a job with unattractive aspects – the same as any other. There were problem students, a large and unfamiliar workload, a routine that required constant attention, and almost constant noise (you get used to it). I was never what I would call stressed, just a little off balance at times – I consider myself lucky in that aspect of the internship. I may not have been stressed, but I did spend quite a bit more time at the gym in the evenings during those three months.

You are most likely wondering where all this is going. So I'll tell you. The only reason I've written this is so anyone who is considering going into teaching can gain a fresh perspective on the nature of the profession and the role they will play in it. If you really believe you will enjoy it and be able to make a difference, then stop there and go for it. Forget the doubts about career prospects; ignore all the negative things you are going to hear from students and teachers alike. Accept the fact that it will take a few years to get yourself settled, and the fact that there are lots of parents out there that treat teachers like verbal punching bags. Accept everything that gives you a gross feeling in your guts when you think about teaching. Stick with one point – that you can make a difference – and be happy with your choice. All it takes is a little patience and a sense of humor. Yes, I still want to be a teacher.

Adam Cardoulis graduates in May with a B.Ed. (Primary/Elementary) from Memorial University of Newfoundland. He is currently living in Ottawa, Ontario.



Memorial Presents...

Teacher Stress and Working Conditions: Implications for Teaching and Learning

On February 6, the Harris Centre at Memorial University sponsored a presentation on *Teacher Stress and Working Conditions: Implications for Teaching and Learning*. Dr. Lynda Younghusband presented the results of her research on teacher stress in Newfoundland and its impact on the teaching and learning environments. As part of this presentation three panelists discussed Dr. Younghusband's research from various perspectives: Dr. David Dibbon, associate dean for Undergraduate Programs with Memorial University's Faculty of Education; Ms. Denise Pike, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils; and Ms. Glenda Cluett, a teacher recently retired from the Eastern School District. The following contains excerpts from these presentations with an introduction by NLTA President Kevin Foley who had the opportunity to speak at the session as well.

Kevin Foley

... A healthy working environment is possible and attainable.

... From my perspective relief for teachers can be provided and answers can be supplied to some of those things that Dr. Dibbon has recommended in his study and may take care of many of the issues that Dr. Younghusband deals with in her study.

... In the current climate in the school system in Newfoundland and Labrador the possibility of this occurring is bordering on nil. Ways and means of providing this time have to be found.

... We cannot continue to reduce teacher allocations and expect our students to be served properly and our teachers to be treated properly. The pupil teacher ratio that is so often quoted is nonsense and serves more to confuse rather than inform and is

nowhere close to what parents, students and teachers experience daily.

Dr. Lynda Younghusband

... An extensive research base, spanning several decades, characterizes teaching as a high stress occupation. Workplace stress not only impacts teachers' health and well being but also the lives of their families and friends. It has also been found that stress diminishes teacher effectiveness in the classroom, causes teachers to disengage from the job, and distances teachers emotionally and socially from their students, thereby compromising the teacher-student interaction.

... Recent research in Newfoundland illuminates a picture of a profession that demands constant attention, often to the detriment of our teachers' health and well being. Teacher participants in this study were concerned not just for themselves but for their colleagues and their students as well. The stigma associated with stress, and fear for their jobs, had prevented these teachers from speaking out until they were interviewed.

Denise Pike

... The causes for teacher stress are no doubt many and varied. It may be that our society has, without intending to do so, disempowered teachers. Probably we are all, to some degree, guilty of this – politicians, governments, various groups and committees as well as parents. If such is the case, and disempowering teachers is part of the cause of teacher stress then it is going to take all of us, working together to empower them

by building a better understanding of the demands of teaching and the impact that issues like stress can have on the learning environment of our children.

... Fostering a positive learning environment in a classroom that is being disrupted on a daily basis, and sometimes several times a day, is not only very STRESSFUL for teachers and Administrators but it also very STRESSFUL for students and parents as well. A fact that often times is not only not appreciated but is not even recognized.

... Stress is a normal part of life at home and on the job and we all know that stress occurs in all types and levels of employment. As a parent volunteer who has had the opportunity to visit many schools and from my job working for a local newspaper and visiting businesses and organizations, I can honestly say I've yet to see another occupation besides teaching where employees are expected to work for hours on end with few consistent breaks. A common theme among teachers is "duty, duty, duty". Most teachers say they have just 15 minutes to eat lunch and seldom enough time during the day to even use the washroom. With teacher cut backs, there are fewer and fewer teachers every year to meet the same schedule demands. The same workload and the same amount of duty, but fewer bodies to cover it.

Glenda Cluett

... I believe that I was viewed by my peers and students as a hard-nosed, no nonsense teacher. In fact I lived in a solitary world often questioning, and second-guessing my ability to teach, my methods of dealing with situations that arose on a daily basis, even my personality. I drove home from school many the day with a hot burning sensation in my chest feeling that maybe I'd failed today: I should have been more reasonable with that student...I should have tackled that lesson in a different way; and on and on. I dared not express those feelings to just anyone.

... This lack of confidence, low self-esteem or whatever you may call it, is in part a by-product of a school system that seems not to trust its teachers to act professionally or responsibly. When I hear my friends in other professions relate anecdotes of their interactions in the workplace, I am often shocked at their freedom to express themselves without fear of reprimand. I have never experienced that comfort level in my teaching career. It seems that the school system is so regimented that it stifles professional autonomy for its teachers. It thwarts the notion that teachers, administrators and school boards work as a team.

... I am not certain that the public truly comprehends how debilitating the belligerent outburst is to the teacher's performance, both in the moment and in the long term. When an outburst occurs, all learning stops in the classroom. My duty, as the teacher, is to try to maintain a sense of order in the room at such a time; to break the tension for the rest of the students, and to try to return to some productive activity, as well as to deal with the student in question. But when the student is telling you "you're nothing but a f----- woman" or "my mother says I don't have to put up with your s---" ... it is difficult to hold your composure. The feeling of being under attack, in a room where not everyone holds warm and fuzzy feelings for you, lives on long beyond the moment. The scar remains as surely as if the attack had been a physical one.

... Yes, as a teacher I wear many hats. I am protector, confidante, disciplinarian and educator. At the best of times these are conflicting roles. Contrary to how parents sometimes see me, I am not an expert in all these fields. With such high expectations, it's hard not to feel like a failure ...and yet sometimes it is the smallest acknowledgement that keeps you in the game!

Dr. David Dibbon

... Having revisited the data that was collected while I was researching teacher workloads here in the province I see plenty of evidence that would lead me to agree with the statement that high ability teachers who are highly motivated cannot guarantee high levels of teacher performance in a dysfunctional work environment. Furthermore, a dysfunctional work setting is likely to depress initially high levels of both ability and motivation. My research and experience tells me that there are many examples of dysfunctional work settings in our school system and that it is time for all stakeholders to address the situation by devising strategies to improve the working environments in the province's schools and classrooms.

... all stakeholders must work collaboratively to devise sensible strategies that would facilitate improvements to the working environments in the province's schools and classrooms.



Pop Culture, English Teachers and Students

Can They Co-Exist?

by LESLIE L. KENNEDY

Well once again I find I am a victim of my own conceit. I figured I was way ahead of the game by discussing new shows, commercials, songs, etc. with my students on a nearly daily basis, giving some credence to their reactions, but then, I now realize, smugly pointing out their errors, errors they couldn't possibly detect without the benefit of vast expertise, intelligence and experience at least similar in scope to my own. I don't think I came across that snooty, but who knows what some of them might have thought...different people have different takes on the same thing.

This year, thanks to deferred salary leave, I have been attending Memorial full time and will complete the master's program in teaching and learning: literacy and language. Literacy has become my passion and many courses I have been able to take have helped me, I believe, become a better English teacher to my senior high students. This semester popular culture has been a big focus.

As mentioned, I have been incorporating media texts in my classes especially since the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF) came along. I analyzed advertisements, editorial cartoons, letters to the editor, editorials, photographs, paintings, film shorts, cartoons, movies etc. They wrote or constructed most of the above with more or less skill and enthusiasm than I had hoped and often some great stuff and good learning moments ensued. (And by the way, my choice of pronouns was intentional...unfortunately.) But in the back of my mind was a nagging voice saying, "Come on, come on! Hurry up! We've got to get the whole of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* done before Christmas!", because after all, this media stuff was mostly fluff and fun for easy marks done before the real work started. Obviously I did not value the media products we were exploring and producing, did not see them as objects and processes of literacy. I also did not fully understand the potential or meaning of the fact that my students were having fun. Fun means, for the student, the possibility of prolonged engagement, interest guided towards deeper analysis and for me, the revelation that part of the reason this

was all so enjoyable might have been because they were finally in their element, an element they engaged in everyday through their interaction with popular culture and the element in which they felt the most comfortable and knowledgeable.

Part of the reason *A Midsummer Night's Dream* took so long was because I couldn't get them to read it or anything else for that matter. What I really mean is I now realize that I couldn't get them to read *the way* I wanted them to and *what* I wanted them to. The fact is they are reading all the time: email, blogs, magazines, CD and DVD covers and inserts, the Internet, chat rooms, billboards, the sides of shampoo bottles, clothing labels, instructions to work their new cell phone/camera/text messenger/day planner. Then there is the 'reading' they do when they look at music videos, web sites, commercials on TV, radio, soap operas, teen dramas, cop shows, reality shows, sports shows, the news, and documentaries, etc. "And I knows now that don't take no brains!" says an older good friend of mine. She is exactly right. Oh I know it's not Shakespeare but there were a lot of deliberate decisions made about the construction of each by the media producer and there were a lot of decisions made in the heads of our young people when they 'read' them. I just want them to have all the information before they do and so do I. Every such decision can affect how they interpret the world and how they negotiate their own identity. Pretty serious stuff. If they aren't going to read *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Catcher in the Rye* or *Random Passage*, all of which can help them do the important life exercises mentioned above, I think popular culture is a place to start and not just as motivation but as a bridge for students raised on TV and video games and who possess significant literacy skills traditional schooling just doesn't recognize or validate.

Research is showing the increasing educational success gap between the disadvantaged and advantaged in regards to the role played by literacy, media culture and policy. Education has not adequately addressed, Ursula Kelly writes, "the numerous and profound implications for (changes in) literacy in the context of contemporary culture" which have accom-

panied the 'mediatization' of culture through rapid technological advances in media communications in her article, *Literacies and Media Culture* (2005). What this has meant to me is two things: firstly, I have to take seriously the notion of change in terms of what texts my students have experience with and interest in and secondly, I have to give my students more respect in terms of what they like and are willing to engage in and their expertise and knowledge of media, and particularly pop culture. People learn best when they are interested, hence motivated, and perhaps we are dismissing not just a motivational tool used to teach 'more serious' literature or 'high culture' as some people call it, but also a body of 'communicative text' (TV shows and commercials, videos and video games, comics, cartoons, pop music, and pop culture heroes both real and animated) that has as much to offer as any other. There are serious consequences for our students if we do not teach them critical literacy skills for all 'communicative text'. There are also serious consequences ahead if we fail to 'meet our students where they are' – in a mediatized, pop culture environment. Give them credit for their knowledge and use that validation to take them where they need to go in terms of literacy.

I have already said I have sold my students short and failed to truly honour their intelligence and knowledge. In reading an article on the subject, I came across the comment that students just give you what you want to hear and that really struck a chord with me as I get that a lot in my English classroom. Previously, I thought about and consciously tried to provide a safe environment in which feelings and ideas could be shared, but I can think of times as well when I raged against reality shows and nearly throttled several boys for their insistence on the merits of various woman beatin', drug takin', gang belongin' (I know, I'm pushin' the parallelism!) rap hero. These times though, were not so detrimental (I think they mostly viewed my tirades as only, 'Miss is goin' cracked again!' to provide a little entertainment and to wake everybody up before the buses came) as those times when more subtle cues escaped from me: a raised eyebrow, a pinching of lips, a request for another opinion followed by rapturous enthusiasm (for someone finally getting it right!). They *do* only tell us what we want to hear and when some brave soul (or poop disturber) is shot down, however gently, we as teachers lose more than an opportunity to learn ourselves; we lose their trust and we may be all they have.

To my credit, many times I have thrown some pop culture product out there and stated I was unsure or flummoxed about what to think (you can imagine the reactions I get to my vocabulary! I do it

on purpose). What proceeded was often a nice and informative discussion with, I think, a real sense of group journey. But I'm thinking now that only on the rarest of occasions did I really believe 'them' to be the experts; if I did it was a scholarship of limited value and depth. The part I struggled with is the part about the balance between the acknowledgement of the pleasure a particular pop culture text gives them and the notion that *not* anything goes. How could I talk with them about *Survivor* without insulting their taste and intelligence? You can't make people believe what you want them to and neither should you try. What you have got to do is open up the dialogue; ask questions that stimulate thought and reflection without condemnation. Don't withhold or lie about your own opinion but neither suggest it's the only one.

To 'close by return' I am a victim of my own conceit. After all it was not I who made the connection between the TV show *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies* (And I even *knew* this show!), but my Grade 11 student which not only spurred a class commitment to watch it, but excellent analysis and discussion. If we want them to be able to make informed choices about an increasingly commercialized world, a world manipulated by the stakeholders of the global economy; if we want them to have some sense of social justice, they need the information and the analytical skills to do the deconstruction. It's a delicate and complicated dance for a teacher and one only skillfully accomplished through significant reflection, practice and committed belief.

I want a classroom environment where my students are engaged. I want a classroom where what we talk about has meaning for them and will empower the majority of them to live well in the world as it now exists. As an English teacher I have always believed in the value of literature to do this, and I still do, but I really can't get them to read some really great books and I now think it's more complex a problem than 'laziness' or that they are somehow 'bad' because they have grown up surrounded by the 'instant gratification' of popular media. And I have the notion that being literate today includes more than expertise in the 'high culture' texts that people like me find comfortable to deal with. Maybe... (Dare I say it?)...being literate (and intelligent) today does not necessitate expertise in 'high culture' texts at all. I have had to shake up and blow apart some of my most deeply held beliefs and values, not to mention acknowledge some pretty personal prejudices. It's been an unsettling journey but I feel wiser for it.

Leslie Kennedy is the Language Arts Department Head at Mobile Central High, Mobile. She is currently on deferred salary leave to take her master's degree in Education.

"I want a classroom where what we talk about has meaning for them and will empower the majority of them to live well in the world as it now exists."



Succession Planning

by IAN DAVIDSON

Consider the following scenario: The principal of Bright Cove Elementary School for the past 18 years is retiring in June and the school district will have to hire a new principal. With the exception of the first three years, the principal has shared the school administrative duties with a competent assistant principal. The logical choice for successor is that current assistant principal, but in this particular instance, it is not necessarily the case. Despite the fact that the principal was very successful in the position, there was a reluctance to delegate certain key tasks to the administrative partner. As a result, there was also a serious lack of experience by the latter in duties critical to success as a principal. These skills included interviewing, teacher evaluation, and leadership in staff meetings. With proper succession planning this situation would have been avoided.

“Without a focussed and specific succession plan, recruiting desirable candidates becomes significantly more problematic at a time when positive and innovative leaders are needed more than ever.”

How can we ensure that Bright Cove Elementary has a well-prepared candidate ready to step into the complex and demanding role of principal? Who will become the next leaders in our school districts and, more importantly, do we have a vision for how we want to nurture these important individuals? Educational succession planning is a process through which proactive school districts ensure that employees are identified and recruited to fill positions of leadership. Instituted correctly, succession planning will ensure that qualified individuals are promoted to leadership positions to eventually replace the current generation of school and district leaders.

The Importance of Succession Planning

The impending retirement of “baby boomers” en masse will lead to a significant decrease in the pool of qualified and available candidates for leadership positions. There will simply be an overall lack of suitable applicants. In addition, these potential leaders of the future will be expected to implement the new global and technological initiatives currently developing in the field of education – a daunting task indeed. With the advent of the inevitable demands of distance learning, growing numbers of international students along with ever-increasing site-based management responsibilities, our schools are becoming complex organizations to lead. Add to this the stress created by reduced funding, changing school grade structures, the loss of teaching units, and a declining enrolment and school leadership in Newfoundland and Labrador becomes so much more challenging than in the past. Lead teachers who may have applied for leadership positions can become discouraged in the face of these harsh realities and choose not to apply. Without a focussed and specific succession plan, recruiting desirable candidates becomes significantly more problematic at a time when positive and innovative leaders are needed more than ever.

Advantages of Succession Planning

Baldwin (2000) highlights the importance of succession planning, describing it as crucial to the growth and success of school organizations. He believes that the advantages of succession planning are that it provides for:

- An ongoing supply of well-trained, well-motivated people with broad experience who are ready and able to step into key positions as needed.
- A cadre of desirable candidates who are being integrated into the organization with positive goals established for them individually.
- Alignment of the future needs of the organization with the availability of appropriate resources within the organization.

- Positive goals for key personnel, which will help keep them with the organization and will help assure the continuing supply of capable successors for each of the important positions included in the succession plan.
- Defined career paths, which will help recruit and retain better people.

The development of capable, visionary school leaders is a time-consuming task. In order for succession planning to be effective, it must be coordinated and planned well in advance. Hiring teachers with a focus on their potential leadership abilities is an appropriate way to begin the succession planning process, followed by their inclusion in such programs as the lauded "Leadership at Work" in order to develop their leadership skills.

Characteristics of an Effective Succession Planning Process

School districts must create and implement a plan for succession that is unique to their specific needs. However, there are certain characteristics of an effective program that are universal. Fulmer (2005) outlines these characteristics:

- *Smooth transitions.* Having someone to step into an important position when there is a vacancy is a critical measure of the effectiveness of succession management. Helping that person to transition in a positive manner with all the necessary skills and knowledge is as crucial and is often incredibly difficult to execute.
- *The 'right' developmental assignments.* A successful process includes job assignments that properly prepare candidates for their new positions, as compared to a "sink-or-swim" approach.
- *Meaningful appraisals and feedback.* Objective assessments are essential in order for management to specify what is required for a successful promotion.
- *Appropriate selection criteria.* An effective succession management system depends on the development of competencies for each job, giving all stakeholders involved a clear picture of the skills, values, behaviour and attitudes required to succeed.
- *A range of good choices.* A working succession system results in having more than one good person available for a key job. Real success often requires choices between two or more qualified people.

Employees need to feel valued and supported in their professional endeavours. In addition, being able to climb a professional ladder is significant to the psyche of employees. Feelings of desperation can quickly develop if one feels trapped in a dead-end job regardless of how exciting that particular job may be at the time.

Charan, Drotter & Noel (2001) believe that "as organizations will be forced to compete aggressively to attract and retain the very best leaders, they must commit to the development of an integrated and aggressive succession and leadership-development planning system to ensure they have the future skills required for sustainability." The ultimate goal of succession planning is the pairing of individual employee aspirations with the needs of the school district. The only way to keep talented people is to provide them with growth opportunities to keep them challenged and stimulated, ensuring they are not lost to other school districts that offer better career options. Replacing a generation of highly skilled, experienced leaders will not be an easy task but if it is undertaken with the proper consideration in mind, we can ensure that our schools will have well-prepared leaders in the future to take up the mantle of leadership in our schools. In closing, please allow me to present another scenario to consider – who will replace you?

Ian Davidson is Assistant Principal at Clarendville High School.



Professional Development and the Leaves of Change

by ERIC NIPPARD

I was cruising along in my car recently on a trip back from Gander, admiring the fantastic scenery of central Newfoundland. It was a beautiful October fall day and the leaves were ablaze with brilliant golds and reds. As a biologist first and foremost, I am always amazed at the display that trees provide when they are shedding. The greens of summer colour give way to the beautiful colors of autumn. A signal of dormancy but filled with the promise of the potential that germs which are hidden in the stems provide: the promise of rebirth in the spring!

I had three of my favorite things with me – rich, black coffee from the Blue Fish Bistro in Grand Falls, my favorite bagpipe tunes playing on the CD player, and sunshine for the drive back to Stephenville. My mind wandered, as it normally does when I am driving by myself, and I found myself reflecting on what had transpired over the previous three days, and how it was really a parallel to what was happening with the trees of autumn. I had been in Gander to perform my duties as president of the Technology Educators Special Interest Council (TESIC). We had hosted our BGM and professional development conference. It had been hectic but a wonderful professional development experience. We had invited two keynotes: Mr. Stephen Downes and Mr. Leon Cooper, and both had spoken about professional development. The message: "Professional development has to be a personalized and ongoing process." It has to be initialized and guided by the needs of the educator. And it is *not* a day or a two-day long "feed the people" session. Presenters reinforced this idea. Breakout sessions were offered that supported this message and hopefully, teachers went back to their classroom with some new ideas for delivery, as well as food for thought about how they perceive their own professional development initiatives.

As you may be aware, the NLTA has proposed some radical changes to the structure of professional development and the role that special interest councils will have with PD in the province. They have suggested a governing super-structure which will involve

all levels of education: primary, elementary, middle, and senior high, with specialized super-councils guiding the development of PD based upon the needs of educators, as identified by educators. Meetings held in April of 2005 by the NLTA put forward the proposed conditions for continued existence for SICs in the province and input was asked for from the various SIC executives present. The TESIC executive iterated their belief that the role of the SIC was still important and that we could exist within the suggested structure but we would remain the primary body responsible for professional development.

"Just like the trees, the Special Interest Councils will have to shed the leaves of past methods. We have to be willing to grow and experiment with new ideas."

However, I can't help but think that something needs to be changed in the method that we use to deliver PD to our specialist group. The SICs really need to look inward and evaluate the role that they are playing, or are to play in the new order if we are to provide PD that is in line with the self-driven model. Thought has to be given to revamping the "come to me and I'll tell you" model that we have used for years. And, we need to examine ways of providing PD that is significant and on-demand for the user. In other words, the user decides when and where the PD event can and will take place, not vice versa. We have to give thought to our role in providing more frequent events and not simply relying on the once a year AGM model currently in place. The membership deserves more bang for their buck!

And the idea of the large-scale conference has to be revisited. Are we really servicing the needs of the teaching population? Are we reaching the maximum number of members at our yearly gatherings? It is a well-known

fact that release time and expenses often prevent teachers from accessing AGMs or BGMs. The TESIC did examine and implement an alternate method of delivering their BGM in October. We offered the choice of on-site in Gander, or off-site access through video conferencing at selected locations. Video units were placed in Western and Eastern districts, which considerably reduced the expense of accessing what we had to offer. Coordinators were on-site to work with the participants. The keynote and plenary sessions were broadcast, along with select sessions during the day. Activities associated with the plenary were interactive at both sites because we had arranged for the prior delivery of any materials used in the sessions, to the site. On site face-to-face sessions were also offered to give a more personal touch to the event. Even the BGM election of officers was held via video, with voting taking place using a web-based database. We think it worked and we will definitely be looking at future events with this type of delivery in mind. Of course, this type of delivery also creates opportunities for individual access to mentoring or PD. Why can't teachers, in directing their own PD course, identify experts that they would like to work with and arrange for on-demand video feed. Or, if video feed is not available, utilize the Elluminate Live rooms available through CDLI and DELT at Memorial University in St. John's. The sky's the limit! All that is required is the desire and a little elbow grease!

Just like the trees, the Special Interest Councils will have to shed the leaves of past methods. We have to be willing to grow and experiment with new ideas. If we are to offer the best to our teachers, we have to be willing to take risks and put forth models which explore teacher-centered and teacher-driven professional development. They may not always be a success, but what is wrong with trying? Death and regeneration is not always a bad thing!

Eric Nippard is President of the Technology Educators Special Interest Council (TESIC).



MARGARET WILLIAMS TRUST FUND AWARD

March 31, 2006 (Application deadline)

Applications are now invited for the Margaret Williams Trust Fund Award which has been established to promote the development of librarianship in Newfoundland and Labrador. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis to applicants seeking funding for library-related projects or assistance in pursuing graduate studies in librarianship, archival studies, or teacher librarianship. Annual awards generally approximate \$1,000. For information and an application form contact Mr. Richard Ellis, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Margaret Williams Trust Fund, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1B 3Y1.

THE ARTS WORK CONFERENCE

April 5-7, 2006

St. John's. The Arts Work: Create! Learn! Teach! An arts in education conference for the primary/elementary teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador. For more information contact donnamlis@gov.nl.ca.

MUSIC SIC CONFERENCE

April 6-7, 2006

The Music Special Interest Council (MSIC), in tandem with the Arts Work Conference, will be sponsoring professional development for K-6 Music teachers on April 6-7, 2006. The MSIC will run a separate professional development day on Friday, April 7 for 7-12 Music educators. The MSIC BGM will be held on the evening of April 6, followed by a social. Details to follow. Contact: Noreen Greene-Fraize, ngreenefraize@hotmail.com, Tel: 709-753-2618.

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION – UNDERSTANDING ADHD

May 11, 2006

Health Science Centre Main Auditorium, St. John's. Presented by the Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. Presenter: Dr. Bruno DiGravio. For further information or for registration contact: ldanl@nl.rogers.com, Tel: 709-753-1445; Fax: 709-753-4747.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

June 25-27, 2006

Vancouver. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation, in cooperation with the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Education International is coordinating an International Peace Education Conference (IPEC) as a strand of the World Peace Forum (June 23-28). Theme: *Educating a Generation to Create a Culture of Peace*. Over 100 workshops and keynote presentations will be available to participants. For more information visit www.worldpeaceforum.ca or contact Jane Turner at jturner@bctf.ca or 604-871-1871.

TEACHERS INSTITUTE ON

CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

November 5-10, 2006

Parliament Hill, Ottawa. Get an insider's view of Canada's parliamentary system. Meet parliamentarians and political, procedural and pedagogical experts. Explore key issues in parliamentary democracy. Develop resources for teaching about Parliament, governance, democracy and citizenship. Application deadline: **April 30, 2006**. For detailed information and application forms visit www.parl.gc.ca/education, Tel: 613-992-4793 or 1-866-599-4999.

Dates to Remember

April 2006

- Apr 1 Joint Council Meeting
- Apr 1 **Deadline:** Johnson Bursary Applications
- Apr 15 **Deadline:** Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
- Apr 30 **Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
- Apr 30 **Deadline:** Year-end resignation from contract

May 2006

- May 7 **Deadline:** Notification by Board of layoff
- May 14-20 Branch Election Week
- May 18 **Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications

June 2006

- June 2-3 NLTA Executive Meeting
- June 15 **Deadline:** Notification by board of acceptance/rejection of Deferred Salary Leave requests

July 2006

- July 31 **Deadline:** NLTA Scholarship Applications



SAC Conference

May 31 - June 2, 2006 • Gander Hotel

LEADERSHIP – A RISKY BUSINESS

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Ted Whiteland

PRESENTERS:

Stephanie Boyle, Senior Policy Analyst, RCMP
Dr. Linda Younghusband, MUN

PRE-CONFERENCE:

Linda Millar, Concerned Childrens' Advertisers
"Media Literacy, Bullying and Healthy Schools"
Weds., May 31 (Open to classroom teachers)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Wade Verge, wadeverge@ncsd.ca,
Tel: 709-629-3241 or
Ellis Pope, epope@ncsd.ca,
Tel: 709-261-2360